

BACTERIAL BLIGHT OF FISHTAIL PALM CAUSED BY *PSEUDOMONAS AVENAE*

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The clustered fishtail palm, *Caryota mitis* Lour., is native from Burma to the Malay Peninsula, Java, and the Philippine Islands. The palm grows in clusters 12-40 ft high, with green-gray trunks topped by dense tufts of fan-shaped, dull-green leaves, jagged at the apex and nodding at the tips. They are grown in greenhouses as well as outdoors in the warm regions of south Florida (2,4).

A severe blight was noted on fishtail palm from a foliage nursery in south Florida. The symptoms indicated a bacterial etiology and a characteristic bacterial organism was consistently isolated from the diseased tissue (3).

SYMPTOMS: The disease begins as small, water-soaked, translucent areas running along leaf veins. Mature lesions are brown to black, have a chlorotic halo, and are 1-2 mm wide and up to 50 mm long (1,2). Initial invasion in most cases seems to occur at the leaf margins through hydathodes. Leaves of all ages are apparently susceptible to infection, but leaves that are unfolding and not fully mature are much more severely affected (1,3).

The bacterial pathogen was a non-fluorescent pseudomonad whose cultural, physiological, and biochemical properties, along with pathogenicity to fishtail palm and sweet corn, identified it as *Pseudomonas alboprecipitans* Rosen (3). It has since been renamed *P. avenae* Mann. (1,5).



Figure 1. *Pseudomonas avenae* on *Caryota mitis* showing dark, elongate lesions running along the veins.

C O N T R O L :

Elimination of overhead irrigation and removal of symptomatic leaves are the recommended cultural controls (1). Providing good air circulation around the plants would facilitate more rapid drying and lessen the chance of infection.

SURVEY AND DETECTION:

Look for watersoaked to dark, elongated lesions which run along the veins and often start from the leaf margins.

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